

Biographical Sketch
AN
ACCOUNT

OF THE

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153
LIFE and WRITINGS

OF

Spinoza, B. H.
SPINOSA.

To which is added,

An ABSTRACT of his *Theological*
Political TREATISE.

CONTAINING

- | | |
|--|--|
| I. His Discourses of Prophecy. | V. Of Miracles. |
| II. Of Prophets. | VI. Of the Dependency of Religion, and all Things relating to it, on the Civil Magistrate. |
| III. Of the Gift of Prophecy to other Nations as well as the Jewish. | VI. Of the Liberty of Thinking and Speaking. |
| IV. Of Ceremonies. | |

Alitur vitium crescitque regendo.

VIRG.


L O N D O N :

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P R E F A C E.

 PINOSA having obtain'd as considerable a Reputation for his *Virtue, and the Integrity of his Life,* as for his *Irreligion, and the Impiety of his Opinions:* It is the Misfortune of many to be inclin'd to judge favourably of the latter, from a Deference and Esteem of the former.

To prevent therefore the Belief that Heresy is ever the less pernicious for being attended with Humanity and Goodness; I have, with the Life of this Philosopher, likewise given an Account of his Writings, and an Abstract of his most famous Treatise in the End.

However, since the Absurdity of his Philosophy has already been sufficiently shewn by some of the best and most eminent Hands; I cou'd not, without Presumption, think of adding any Remarks of my own.

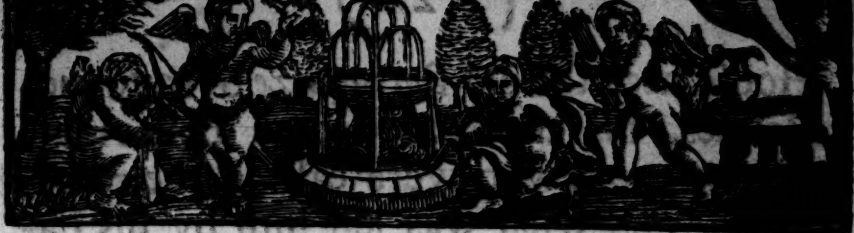
PREFACE

PINOS A leading authority in con-
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AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE and WRITINGS
OF
SPINOSA, &c.



HIS eminent Philosopher was by Descent and Education a *Jew*. Not long after his Birth, his Parents gave him the Name of *Baruch*; but having afterwards forsaken his Religion, he chang'd it, and call'd himself *Benedict*. He was born at *Amsterdam* the 24th of *November*, in the Year 1632. His Father was a *Portuguese Jew*, and a considerable Merchant in that Place, where he liv'd upon the *Burg-wall*, in a handsome
B House

House near the old *Portuguese* Synagogue. Besides, his civil and decent Behaviour, his Relations who were easy in their Fortunes, and what was left him by his Father and Mother, prove, that his Extraction, as well as his Education, was above that of the common sort of People. *Samuel Carceris*, likewise a *Portuguese* Jew, marry'd the youngest of his two Sisters, whose Names were *Rebeckah* and *Miriam*. *Spinosa*, even from his Child-hood, shew'd something of an extraordinary Genius; his Fancy was lively, and his Wit penetrating and quick; he had the famous *Francis Vanden Ende* for his Master, who instructed him in the *Latin* Tongue, and first instill'd into him those Principles which were the Foundation of his future Greatness.

Vanden Ende had a Daughter, who was so perfectly skill'd in that Language, that she was able to teach her Father's Scholars in his Absence. She was likewise a Mistress of Musick, and being of a gay and agreeable Temper, tho' she was none of the most Beautiful, yet having a great deal of Sense, *Spinosa* at last fell in Love with her; but one *Kerkering* a Gentleman of *Hamburg*, by a Neck-Lace of Pearls which he gave her, soon withdrew her

her Affections from *Spinoza*, and obtain'd her in Marriage himself.

Spinoza being a Master of *Latin*, apply'd himself to the Study of Divinity ; but finding it did not suit his Inclination, he left it, and betook himself altogether to *Physicks*. *Descartes* was the Master he follow'd ; he declar'd he had all his Philosophy from him. That Maxim of His perpetually charming him, *viz.* That nothing ought to be admitted as true, but what was prov'd by sure and undeniable Reason.

From which he concluded, that the ridiculous Doctrines of the *Rabbins* could never be admitted by a Man of Judgment and Sense ; because they are only built upon the Authority of the *Rabbins* themselves, without any Ground or even Appearance of Reason.

From that Time he began to be reserv'd among the the *Jews*, and to shun them as much as he cou'd ; he was seldom seen in their Synagogues, which exasperated them to the highest Degree ; nor did they believe but he wou'd leave them, and be a Convert to the Christian Religion, tho' notwithstanding he had frequent Conversations with Christians he never embrac'd their Opinions.

Francis Halma, in his Account of *Spinoza* in Dutch, says, that the Jews offer'd him a Pension before his Desertion, to engage him to remain among them, and appear now and then in their Synagogues. This *Spinoza* himself affirm'd very often to the *Sieur Vander Spyck*, in whose House he liv'd, and to some other Persons; adding, that the Pension the *Rabbins* design'd to give him amounted to 1000 Florins: But he protested at the same time, that had they offer'd him ten times as much he would neither have accepted it, nor frequented their Assemblies on any such Motive; the Love of Truth being the only thing that he valu'd. Mr. *Bayle* tells us, that he was one Day assaulted by a Jew, as he was coming out of the Play-House, who wounded him in the Face with a Knife, and that he knew he design'd to have kill'd him, tho' his Wound, as it happen'd, was not dangerous; but the People with whom he liv'd gave quite another Account of the Affair: they had it from *Spinoza* himself, who told 'em, that one Evening as he was coming out of the old *Portuguese* Synagogue, he saw a Man by him with a Dagger in his Hand; whereupon standing on his guard, and retiring backwards he avoided the Blow, which reach'd no farther than his Cloaths: He
always

always kept the Coat that was run thro' with the Dagger as a kind of a Memorial of that Event. Afterwards not thinking himself safe at *Amsterdam*, he retir'd to some other Place with the first opportunity.

He had no sooner left the Communion of the *Jews*, but they prosecuted him Juridically according to their Ecclesiastical Laws, and Excommunicated him. The Sentence of Excommunication was publicly pronounc'd by *Chacham Abuabb*, a *Rabbin* of great Reputation among them; which, as it is something very curious, I shall set it down at large.

According to what has been decreed in the Council of Angels, and definitively determin'd in the Assembly of Saints, We Reject, Banish, and Declare *him* to be Cursed and Excommunicated, agreeable to the Will of God and his Church, by Virtue of the Book of the Law, and of the Six Hundred and Thirteen Precepts contain'd therein. We pronounce the same Interdiction used by *Joshua*, with respect to the City of *Jericho*; the same Curse wherewith *Elisba* cursed those wanton and insolent Children, as well as his Servant *Gebasi*; the same Anathema us'd by *Barak*, with respect to *Meros*; the same Excommunication us'd anciently by the
Members

Members of the Great Council ; and which *Jebuda* the Son of *Ezekiel* did likewise thunder against his Servant, as it is observed in the *Gemara* under the Title *Heduschim*, &c. Lastly, without excepting any of the Curses, Anathemas, Interdictions, and Excommunications, which have been fulminated from the Time of *Moses* our Law-giver to this present Day, we pronounce them all in the Name of *Achthariel*, who is also call'd *Jah*, the Lord of Hosts ; in the Name of the Great Prince *Michael* ; in the Name of *Metatron*, whose Name is like that of his Master ; in the Name of *Sardaliphon*, whose ordinary Employment consists in presenting Flowers and Garlands to his Master, that is, in offering the Prayer of the Children of *Israel* before the Throne of God : Lastly, in that Name which contains Forty-two Letters, viz. in the Name of him who appear'd to *Moses* in the Bush ; in that Name by which *Moses* open'd and divided the Waters of the *Red-Sea* ; in the Name of him who said *I am that I am, and who shall be* ; by the mysterious Depths of the great Name of God *Jehovah* ; by his Holy Commandments ingrav'd upon the two Tables of the Law : Lastly, in the Name of the Lord of *Hosts*, and of the Globes, Wheels and mysterious Beasts which

which *Ezekiel* saw. Let him be cursed by the Lord God of *Hosts*, who sits above the Cherubims, whose holy and dreadful Name was pronounc'd by the High Priest in the Great Day of Propitiation. Let him be cursed in Heaven and in Earth, by the very Mouth of the Almighty God. Let him be cursed in the Name of the Great Prince *Michael*, in the Name of *Metatron*, whose Name is like that of his Master. * Let him be curs'd in the Name of *Achtariel Jah*, who presides over Battles from the Lord; in the Name of those Holy Beasts and mysterious Wheels; let him be cursed by the very Mouth of the Seraphims; lastly, let him be cursed in the Name of those ministering Angels, who are always present before God, to serve him in all Purity and Holiness.

Was he born in *Nisan* (*March*) a Month, the Direction whereof is assign'd to *Uriel* and to the Angels of his Company? Let him be cursed by the Mouth of *Uriel* and by the Mouth of the Angels whereof he is Head.

Was he born in *Pjar*, (*April*) a Month, the Direction whereof is assign'd to *Ze-*

* The Letters of the Word *Metatron* make up the same Number with the Word *Schadai* the Almighty, viz. three hundred and fourteen.

phaniel, and to the Angels of his Company? Let him be cursed by the Mouth of *Zephaniel*, and by the Mouth of the Angels whereof he is Head.

Was he born in *Sivan*, (*May*) a Month, the Direction whereof belongs to the Angel *Amniel*? Let him be cursed by the Name of *Amniel*, and by the Mouth of the Angels whereof he is Head.

Was he born in *Thamnus* (*June*) a Month, the Direction whereof is assign'd to the Angel *Peniel*? Let him be cursed by the Mouth of *Peniel* and by the Mouth of the Angels whereof he is Head.

Was he born in *Abh*, (*July*) a Month, the Direction of which is assign'd to the Angel *Barkiel*, and to those of his Company? Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of *Barkiel*, and the Mouth of the Angels whereof he is Head.

Was he born in *Elul*, (*August*) a Month, the Direction of which is assign'd to the Angel *Periel*, and to the Angels of his Company? Let him be cursed by the Mouth of *Periel* and by the Mouth of the Angels whereof he is Head.

Was he born in *Tisri*, (*September*) a Month, the Direction of which is committed to *Zuriel*, and to the Angels of his Company? Let him be cursed by the Mouth

Mouth of *Zuriel*, and by the Mouth of the Angels of whom he is Head.

Was he born in *Marcheseh*, (*October*) a Month, the Direction of which belongs to *Zachariel*, and to the Angels of his Company? Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of *Zachariel*, and by the Mouth of the Angels of whom he is Head.

Was he born in *Hisleu*, (*November*) a Month, the Direction whereof is assign'd to the Angel *Adoniel*, and to the Angels of his Company? Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of *Adoniel*, and by the Mouth of the Angels of whom he is Head.

Was he born in *Tevat*, (*December*) a Month, the Direction of which is committed to the Angel *Anael*, and to the Angels of his Company? Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of *Anael*, and by the Mouth of the Angels of whom he is Head.

Was he born in *Schevat*, (*January*) a Month, the Direction of which is assign'd to the Angel *Gabriel*, and to those of his Company? Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of *Gabriel*, and by the Mouth of the Angels of whom he is Head.

Was he born in *Adar*, (*February*) a Month, the Direction whereof is assign'd to the Angel *Rumiel*, and to those of his Company? Let him be curs'd by the
C Mouth

Mouth of *Rumiel*, and by the Mouth of the Angels of whom he is Head.

Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of the Seven Angels who preside over the Seven Days of the Week, and by the Mouth of all the Angels who follow them and fight under their Banners. Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of the Four Angels who are appointed over the Four Seasons of the Year, and by the Mouth of all the Angels that follow them and fight under their Banners. Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of the Seven Principalities. Let him be curs'd by the Mouth of the Prince of the Law, whose Name is *Crown* and *Seal*. In a Word, let him be curs'd by the Mouth of the strong, powerful, and dreadful God. We beseech the Great God to confound such a Man, and to hasten the Day of his Destruction. May God, the God of Spirits, depress him under all Flesh, extirpate, destroy, exterminate, and annihilate him. The Secret Judgments of the Lord, the most contagious Storms and Winds will fall upon the Head of impious Men; the Exterminating Angels will fall upon them: Which Way soever the impious Man turn, he will never find any thing but Contradiction, Obstacles, and Curses. His Soul, at his Death, will forsake his Body, being deliver'd

(II)

deliver'd up to the quickest Sense of Fear, Horror, and Anguish; it will then be impossible for him to avoid the Blow of Death, and the Judgments of God. God sends the sharpest and most violent Evils upon him. Let him perish by the Sword, by a burning Fever, by a Consumption, being dry'd up by Fire within, and cover'd with Leprosie and Imposthumes without. Let God pursue him, till he be entirely rooted out and destroy'd. The Sword of the impious Man shall be pierced through his own Breast, his Bow shall be broken; he will be like the Straw which is scattered about by the Wind. The Angel of the Lord will pursue him in Darkness, in slippery Places, where the Paths of the Wicked are. His Destruction will fall upon him at a Time when he does not expect it; he will find himself taken in the Snare which he had laid in private for others. Being driven from the Face of the Earth, he will be driven from the Light into Darkness. Oppression and Anguish will seize him on every side. His Eyes shall see his Condemnation. He will drink the Cup of the Indignation of the Lord, whose Curses will cover him as his Garments. The Earth will swallow him up, God will extirpate him and shut him for

ever out of his House. Let God never forgive him his Sins. Let the Wrath and Indignation of the Lord surround him, and smother for ever upon his Head. Let all the Curses contain'd in the Book of the Law fall upon him. Let God blot him out of his Book : Let God separate him to his own Destruction from all the Tribes of *Israel*, and give him for his Lot all the Curses contain'd in the Book of the Law.

As for you who are still living, serve the Lord your God, who bless'd *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Moses*, *Aaron*, *David*, *Solomon*, the Prophets of *Israel*, and so many good Men every where dispers'd among the *Gentiles*. May it please the Great God to shower his Blessings upon this whole Assembly, and upon the other Holy Assemblies, and the Members thereof. God keep them all under his Holy Protection. God preserve them in his Great Mercy, and deliver them from all sorts of Misery and Oppression. God grant them all a great many Years; let him bless and prosper all their Undertakings. Lastly, may the Great God shortly grant them that Deliverance, which they with all *Israel* expect : And thus let his good Will and Pleasure be fulfilled. *Amen.*

Spinoza having openly separated himself from the *Jews*, whose Doctors he had exasperated before, by contradicting them, and by discovering their ridiculous Impostures; 'tis no wonder if they traduc'd him as a Blasphemer, an Enemy to the Law of God, and an Apostate, who had left them only to throw themselves into the Arms of the Infidels; and thunder'd out the most terrible Excommunication against him: But *Spinoza* protested against that Excommunication, and made an Answer in *Spanish*, which was directed to the *Rabbins*, and was received, as will be shewn hereafter.

The Law, and the Antient Jewish Doctors expressly say, that a Man ought to understand some Trade or Mechanical Art, as well as be skilful in Science, that it may help him in a case of Necessity, and get him wherewith to maintain himself. *Spinoza* being well vers'd in the Law, and the Customs of the Antients, was not ignorant of this Maxim, and made good Use of it, because it was a wise and reasonable one: Therefore he learn'd a Mechanical Art before he retir'd and embrac'd the Life he intended: It was to make Glasses for *Telescopes*, and other Uses; and he succeeded so well therein, that People from all Parts came

to purchase them of him. Some of the Glasses which he had polish'd, were found in his Cabinet after his Death, and sold at a considerable Rate.

After he had perfected himself in that, he apply'd his Mind for some Time to Drawing, and with such Diligence, that he left a whole Book of his Draughts behind him; among which were some Heads of several considerable Persons who were known to him, or had Occasion to visit him.

Thus he was able to maintain himself with the Work of his Hands, and beside to mind his Study as he intended to do; so that having no Occasion to stay in *Amsterdam* he left it, and took Lodgings in the House of one of his Acquaintance, who liv'd upon the Road from *Amsterdam* to *Auwerkerke*. He spent his Time there in studying and working his Glasses; when they were polish'd, his Friend took Care to send for them to sell them, and make Remittances of the Money to him.

In the Year 1664. *Spinoza* departed from that Place, and retir'd to *Rynsburg* near *Leyden*, where he spent all the Winter, and then went away to *Voorburg* a League from the *Hague*, as he himself says in his thirtieth Letter, written to *Peter Ralling*. He liv'd there, as is reported, Three or
Four

Four Years, during which Time he got a great many Friends there, who were all distinguish'd by their Quality, or by Civil and Military Employments: They were often in his Company, and took exceeding Pleasure in hearing him talk. At their Request he settled himself at last at the *Hague*.

It is scarce credible how frugal and sober he was all the Time, not that his Circumstances were so indifferent as not to permit him to spend more had he been willing: He had Friends enough who offer'd him all manner of Assistance; but he was naturally very sober, and cou'd be satisfy'd with a little; and he did not care People should think he had liv'd even once at any other Person's Expence. A Milk-scoop, done with Butter, wou'd frequently suffice him a Day, which scarce amounted to Three-pence; nor wou'd he ever eat any Thing more expensive.

As for his Person; he was of a middle Stature, the Features of his Face were good; his Skin was something tawny; his Hair black and curling; his Eyebrows long, and of the same Colour with his Hair: In short, by his Looks he might be easily known to be descended from a *Portuguese Jew*; he was so negligent of his Cloaths, that they were no better than those

those of the meanest Citizen. One of the most eminent Counsellours of State going to see him, found him in a Morning Gown so slovenly, that he blamed him for it, and offer'd him another. *Spinoza* answered him, that a Man was never the better for having a finer Gown; to which he added, it is unreasonable to wrap up Things of little or no value in a precious Cover.

He was not more frugal in his manner of Living, than free and easy in his Conversation: He knew admirably well how to be Master of his Passions. He was never either very Melancholy or very Merry. He had the Command of his Anger, and if at any Time he was uneasy in his Mind, he did not let it appear; or, if he happened to express his Grief by some Gestures or Words, he immediately retired, lest he should do any thing that might be unbecoming. He was besides very courteous and obliging, and wou'd very often discourse with the People of the House, whenever they were sick or afflicted: He would endeavour to comfort them, and exhort them to bear with Patience those Evils which God had assign'd them. He put the Children in mind of going to Church, and taught them to be Dutiful to their Parents. When the People

ple of the House came from Church, he would ask them what they had learned, and what they could remember of the Sermon. He had a great esteem for Dr. Cordes, a pious and good-natur'd Man, and would frequently speak in his Praise. Nay, somerimes he went to hear him preach, and approv'd of his way of Explaining the Scripture, and the solid Applications he made of it: He at the same time advis'd the People of the House not to miss any Sermon of so excellent a Preacher.

It happened one Day, that the Woman of the House ask'd him, whether he believed she could be saved in the Religion she profess'd? He answered, your Religion is a good one, you need not look for another, nor doubt that you may be sav'd in it, provided, whilst you apply your self to Piety, you live at the same Time an honest and peaceable Life.

When he stay'd at Home, he was troublesome to no Body; he spent the greatest Part of his Time quietly in his own Chamber. When he happened to be tired with Study, he'd go down Stairs to refresh himself, and would discourse with the People of the House about any thing that might afford Matter for an ordinary Conversation, or even about Trifles;

He also took Pleasure in smoaking *Tobacco*; or when he was willing to divert himself somewhat longer, he would throw Flies into a Cob-web, and was so diverted with the Battle, that he would oftentimes break out into Laughter. He observ'd also with a *Microscope*, the different Parts of the smallest Insects; from whence he drew such Consequences as seem'd to him to agree best with his Discoveries.

So little was his Regard for Money, that he contented himself always with living from Hand to Mouth. *Simon de Vries* of *Amsterdam*, who, in his 26th Letter, calls him his most faithful Friend, presented him with a Sum of two thousand Florins; but *Spinoza*, in the Presence of the Man of the House, desired to be excus'd from accepting the Money, under Pretence, that if he received it 'twould infallibly divert him from his Studies.

The same *Simon de Vries* being like to die, and having no Family, purpos'd to make him his Heir; but *Spinoza* would never consent, and told him, he should not think of leaving his Estate to any but his Brother, who was his nearest Relation, and by the Right of Nature his Heir.

This was executed as he propos'd, but upon Condition, that the Brother should pay a sufficient Annuity for his Maintenance;

nance; and that Clause was likewise faithfully executed: But that which is particular, is, that tho' an Annuity of 500 Florins, by Virtue of that Clause, was offer'd to *Spinoza*, yet he thinking it too considerable, wou'd accept of no more than 300.

Another Instance of the Disinterestedness of *Spinoza* is what pass'd after the Death of his Father. The Succession was to be divided between him and his two Sisters, to which they were condemn'd in Law, tho' they had left nothing undone to hinder him of it; yet instead of dividing that Succession, he gave them his Share, and kept only for himself a good Bed, with its Furniture.

Spinoza had no sooner publish'd some of his Works, but he grew very famous in the World, among the most considerable Persons, who look'd upon him as a Man of a great and exalted Genius. Mr. *Stoupe*, Lieutenant-Colonel of a Regiment of *Swissers*, in the Service of the King of *France*, commanded in the City of *Utrecht*, in the Year 1673. he had been before Minister of the *Walloon Church* in *London*, during the Civil Wars of *England*; he was afterwards made Brigadier, and was kill'd at the Battle of *Stenkirk*. While he was at *Utrecht* he writ a Book, entitl'd,

The Religion of the Dutch ; wherein he upbrades the Reform'd Divines, in neglecting to answer a Book which was publish'd under their Eyes, in the Year 1670, entitled, *Tractatus Theologico Politicus*, whereof *Spinoza* own'd himself to be Author. At that very Time he writ several Letters to *Spinoza*, from whom he received several Answers ; and at last he desired him to repair to him, at a certain Time to *Utrecht*. Monsieur *Stoupe* was so much the more desirous that he shou'd come there, because the Prince of *Conde*, who then took Possession of that Government, had a mind to discourse with *Spinoza* : And it was confidently reported, that his Highness was so well dispos'd to recommend him to the King, that he hoped to obtain a Pension easily for him, provided he would dedicate one of his Books to his Majesty. He receiv'd that Letter with a Passport, and set out from the *Hague* a little while after he had receiv'd it ; but the Prince of *Conde* departed from *Utrecht* some Days before he arriv'd : However Mr. *Stoupe* assur'd him he would willingly use his Interest to procure him a Pension * from the King ; but

* The King of France, at that Time, gave Pensions to Men of Learning and Sense, especially to Strangers, who wou'd dedicate their Writings to him.

because he did not design to dedicate any Book to the King, he refus'd the Offer that was made him, with all the Civility he was able.

At his Return, the Mob at the *Hague* were extremely incens'd against him; they look'd upon him as a Spy, one who kept a publick Correspondence with the Enemy, and therefore determin'd to kill him; but however he clear'd his Innocence so well that they never attempt'd his Life.

In that Year the Elector Palatine being inform'd of the great Capacity and Genius of *Spinoza*, he was desirous he shou'd come to teach *Philosophy* at *Heydelberg*, ordering the famous *Fabritius*, Professor of Divinity, and one of his Counsellours to propose it; who offer'd him in that Prince's Name the Professorship, and a full Liberty of Reasoning, according to his own Principles, as he shou'd think fit; but that Offer was attended with a Difficulty which *Spinoza* could not agree to: For, tho' the Liberty granted him was never so great, yet he was not in any manner allow'd to advance any thing contrary to the Religion establish'd by Law; which knowing it was impossible to do, he return'd the following Answer, 'You don't tell me within what Bounds you limit my Liberty of Reasoning, that I may not

'not disturb the Religion establish'd by
 'Law. As for his Works; he publish'd in the
 Year 1664, *Des Cartes's Principles of Philo-*
sophy, Geometrically Demonstrated; and
 soon after his *Metaphysical Meditations*.
 Also in the Year 1670, he publish'd his
Tractatus Theologico Politicus, proving the
 Conformity of the Scriptures, with a Phi-
 losophical Freedom of Thinking; which
 being a Book that has made a considera-
 ble Noise in the World, I have given an
 Abstract of it in the End.
 In Several other Writings *Spinoza* left after
 his Death, which are call'd his *Posthumous*
Works. The first is a Treatise of *Morals*,
 Geometrically demonstrated. The second
 is a Treatise of *Politicks*. The third is con-
 cerning the *Understanding*. The fourth is a
 Collection of Letters. The fifth is an Ab-
 bridgment of the *Hebrew Grammar*. These
Posthumous Works are writ with the same
 Spirit as the others; the Treatise of *Morals*
 begins with Definitions of God; in the
 sixth, he says, God is an Infinite Being,
 that is, a Substance, which contains in it's
 self an Infinity of Attributes; every one
 whereof express an eternal and infinite
 Substance. In his 21st Letter, he says, he
 acknowledges his Notion of God is very
 different from that of the Modern
 Christians: That he believes God to be the
 immanent

immanent and not the transient Cause of all things.

To understand this Opinion, we must consider, that the Productions of a Transient Cause are External, or out of it self; whereas the Immanent Cause is confin'd within it self, without acting outwardly at all; by Infinite, he means those Bounds to which Humane Understanding can never find any End. He says, that they were in the wrong who charg'd him with asserting, that God and Matter were the same; notwithstanding he cou'd not forbear confessing that Matter is a thing Essential to the Deity, who is and acts only on Matter, that is, in the Universe. He likewise supposes, that there are two Eternal Properties in God, viz. *Thinking* and *Extension*; by which Properties he imagines the Universe, and all the Beings it comprehends, do essentially belong to the Nature of God, consider'd as a Substance, whose *Thought* and *Extension* are Infinite. Thus he owns God the general Cause of all things; and denies that he will either reward or punish the Actions of this Life, because they naturally proceed from Humane Nature. In his *Ethicks*, he makes the Soul and Body but One Being, and says, 'When I speak of the Body, I mean only a Mode which expresses the Essence

'sence of God in a certain and precise
 ' Manner, as *he* is consider'd under the
 ' Notion of an *extended* Thing : As for
 ' the Soul, which *is* and *acts* in the Body,
 ' it is only another Modification or Man-
 ' ner of Being, produc'd by *Nature*, or
 ' manifested by *Thought* ; it is not a Spi-
 ' rit, or a particular Substance no more
 ' than the Body, but a Modification which
 ' expresses the *Essence* of God, as he ma-
 ' nifests himself, his Acts and Works by
 ' Thought. In his 2^{1st} Letter, he says,
 that the Incarnation of *Jesus Christ* is no-
 thing but the Eternal Wisdom, which ha-
 ving appear'd in all Things, particularly
 in our Hearts and Souls, was at last ma-
 nifested in an extraordinary Manner in
 him. Further, he says, that some Church-
 es hold, that God made himself Man ; but
 for his part, he has declar'd he does not
 know what they mean by it ; that to him
 it seems as strange as that a Circle shou'd
 take the Nature of a Triangle or Square ;
 and this gives him Occasion to explain
 that Passage of *St. John*, *viz. the Word*
was made Flesh, by a way of speaking ve-
 ry common among the *Eastern Nations*,
 and to render it thus, God has manifest-
 ed himself in *Jesus Christ*, in a most par-
 ticular manner, *viz. by his Virtue, Piety,*
 and Wisdom, superiour to the rest of
 Mankind. He

He farther, in his *Theologico Politicus*, maintain'd, That Prophecies were only grounded upon the Fancy of the Prophets; and that the Prophets and the Apostles wrote naturally according to their own Light and Knowledge, without any Revelation or Order from God: That they accommodated Religion as well as they could to the Genius of those who liv'd at that Time, and establish'd it upon such Principles as were then well known and commonly received.

He who took Care to publish the *Posthumous Works* of *Spinoza*, reckons, among his Writings which have not been printed, a Treatise concerning the *Rain-Bow*; but his Friends not advising him to publish it, he resolv'd to burn it, about half a Year before he dy'd. He had also begun a Translation of the *Old Testament* into *Dutch*, and had finish'd the Five Books of *Moses*; but not approving it, he at last burn'd the whole Work in his Chamber.

Spinoza was a Man of a very weak Constitution, Unhealthy, and Lean, and had been troubled with a *Pthyfick* upwards of Twenty Years; nevertheless, the People of the House did not believe him to be so near his End: For, the 22d of *February*, which happen'd to be the *Saturday* before the last Week of the *Carnival*, his

Landlord being come from Church, *Spinoza* went down, and had a pretty long Conversation with him, which did particularly run upon the Sermon; and having taken some Tobacco, he left him and went to Bed; the next Morning he sent for a Physician, who order'd them to boyl a Fowl, that *Spinoza* might immediately have some Broath, which he took, with a good Stomach, about Noon, when the Landlord and his Wife came from Church. In the Afternoon, they being again gone to Church, the Physician staid alone with *Spinoza*; but as they were returning Home, they were very much surpriz'd to hear that *Spinoza* had expired about Three, in the Presence of the Physician, who had left him, and was gone to *Amsterdam*.

Spinoza being dead, the People of the House took Care of his Burial. The Body was carry'd to the Grave the 25th of February, being attended by many Illustrious Persons, where he was interr'd in a Church upon the *Spuy*.

Rebecka de Spinoza, his Sister, declar'd her self his Heir; but she not being willing to pay his Debts till she knew what Effects he had left, a Publick Sale was made of his Goods; and perceiving that after the Payment little or nothing would be

be left, she desisted from proceeding any further ; the whole Sale amounting but to Four Hundred Florins and some Pence.

These are all the Particulars of the Life and Death of *Spinosa* : He was Forty-four Years, two Months, and Twenty-seven Days old when he dy'd ; which was on the 21st of *February*, 1677. and he was bury'd the 25th of the same Month.





A N
A B S T R A C T
O F
S P I N O S A's
Theological Policy, &c.



PROPHECY or Revelation is the true Knowledge of any thing revealed to Men by God; and he is a Prophet who declares and expounds those Things which God hath reveal'd to Persons, who cannot have any certain Knowledge of them, but must only by mere Faith receive and embrace them. A Prophet was by the *Jews* call'd *Nabi*, (that is) an *Orator* or *Interpreter*; as appears in the 7th Chapter of *Exodus*, vers. 1. *And the Lord said unto Moses, see I have made thee a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy Brother (shall be thy Prophet; as if*
he

he should have said, *Aaron* by interpreting to *Pharaoh* what thou say'st, shall act the Part of a Prophet, and thou the Part of God.

It follows from the Definition which has been given of it, that Natural Knowledge may be call'd *Prophecy* ; for those Things which we know by the Light of Nature, depend only upon the Knowledge of God, and his Eternal Decrees : But because this Knowledge is Natural to all Mankind, being founded upon Principles common to all, it is of no value with the Vulgar, who always affecting things rare, and out of the Road, despise the Gift of Nature ; and therefore, whenever mention is made of prophetic Knowledge, they totally exclude Natural, which may with as much Right be call'd Divine as the other, whatever it be ; seeing the Nature of God, of which we participate, and the Decrees of God dictate it unto us ; neither does Natural Knowledge differ from that which Men call Divine, but only because Divine Knowledge exceeds the Limits of Natural ; and, because the Laws of Humane Nature, consider'd in themselves, cannot be the Cause of Divine Knowledge ; but Natural Knowledge, in respect of the Certainty which it includes, and in respect of the Fountain from whence

whence it proceeds, namely, from God himself, doth in no wise give Place to Prophetical Knowledge ; unless some will think that the Prophets had Humane Bodies, but not Humane Souls ; and therefore their Perception and Knowledge were of a quite different Nature from ours : But tho' Natural Knowledge be Divine, yet they who profess and propagate it, cannot be call'd *Prophets*, because the Things which they teach, may, with equal Certainty, and in as high a Degree, be apprehended and embrac'd by others, as well as themselves, and that not by Faith alone. Since therefore our Mind for no other Reason, but because it contains in it self the Nature of God, as its Object, and also participating thereof, is able to form certain Notions, which explicate the Nature of Things, and teach us the Use of Life ; we may with Reason conclude, that the Nature of Man's Mind, being what it is conceiv'd to be, is the Prime Cause of Divine Revelation ; for all those Things which we clearly and distinctly understand, the Idea of God and Nature dictate to us, not in Words, but in a much more excellent Manner, and such as best agrees with the Nature of the Mind ; as every one who has any Notion of certain Knowledge finds by hi own Experience.

But

But because I purpose chiefly to speak of that which belongs only to the Scripture, what I have said of Natural Knowledge shall suffice : And I now proceed to other Causes and Means by which God reveals to Men those Things which do exceed, and also those which do not exceed, the Bounds of Natural Knowledge ; for nothing hinders, but that which we know by the Light of Nature, may by other Ways be communicated to Men.

But it is in the first Place to be observ'd, that the *Jews* never us'd to make mention of mediate and particular Causes, nor ever regarded them ; but for the promoting of Religion, Piety and Devotion, had always recourse to God. For instance, if they got Money by the Trade of Merchandize, they said God gave it them ; if they earnestly desired to do any thing, they said God dispos'd their Hearts to it ; if they seriously thought on any thing, they said it was declar'd to them by God ; so that the Mode of speaking among the *Hebrews* being consider'd, every thing which the Scripture saith God declared to any one, is not to be taken for Prophecy and Supernatural Knowledge.

If then we run thro' all the Sacred Volumes, we shall find that all those Things
which

which God reveal'd to the Prophets, were reveal'd to them either by Words or by Figures and Signs, or else by both together, and that the Words and Signs were either real and true, without the Imagination of the Hearing and Seeing Prophet, or but imaginary : That is, the Fancy and Imagination of the Prophet, even when he was awake, was so dispos'd, that he verily thought he heard Words, or saw and beheld some Thing, or Sign.

For instance; the Voice by which God call'd *Samuel* was not real, but being like the Voice of *Ely*, which he so often heard, it the sooner wrought upon his Fancy, and made him think that every Time he was call'd, it was by *Ely*. The Voice which *Abimelech* heard was also imaginary ; for it is said, *Gen. chap. 20. v. 6. God said unto him in a Dream.* And therefore *Abimelech* not waking, but in his sleep, (the Time when the Fancy is naturally most apt to imagine Things that are not) might have a strong Impression of God's Will upon his Imagination.

It is the Opinion of some *Jews*, that the Words of the *Decalogue* were not vocally pronounc'd by God ; but that the *Israelites* only heard a Noise, which did not articulately form Words, but that the People during the Noise, mentally understood the

the Laws of the *Decalogue*; but it seems more consonant to Scripture, that God did really create a Voice by which he reveal'd the *Decalogue*, tho' even this does not fully solve the Doubt: For, it seems very irrational to suppose, that any thing created by and depending on God, as well as other created Beings do, should be able to express or expound the Essence or Existence of God personally, *viz.* by saying in the first Person, *I am the Lord thy God*; tho' where a Man says with his Mouth, *I understand*, yet no Body thinks in the Mouth of that Man, but his Mind that understands; but because the Mouth hath Reference to the Nature of the Man that said it, and the Person also to whom it was said knows what is the Nature of the Intellect, he easily understands the Mind of the speaking Person, by a comparative Consideration of himself; but they who knew nothing of God, but his mere Name, and desir'd him to speak, that they might be certain of his Existence, how could they be satisfy'd in his Request, by any Creature's saying, *I am thy God*? when that Creature which said so did no more resemble God, nor belong to his Nature than any other Creature did. What if God shou'd have fram'd the Lips of *Moses*, nay of any Beast, to have

articulately pronounc'd *I am thy God*, does it follow that the *Israelites* should thereby have understood the Being and Existence of God?

Moreover, the Scripture seems plainly to declare that God himself spoke, and that he had Figure or Form; and that *Moses*, when he had heard him speak, happen'd to see it, tho' indeed it was but his Back Parts; in which there is a hidden Mystery.

That Revelation may happen only by Signs, or Figures, is plain in *Genesis* (as well as in many other Places) where God reveal'd to *Joseph* his future Dominion by Images that were not real and external, but internal, and depending only upon the Imagination of the Prophet.

And I maintain that (except our Saviour) no Man ever receiv'd Revelation from God, but by the Help of the Imagination, or by the Help of Words, or Signs; and therefore to prophesy, there is not so much need of a perfect Understanding, as of a strong and lively Imagination; as shall be shewn.

And, because the Imagination is wandering and inconstant, Prophecy did not long continue with the Prophets, nor was it frequent, but very rare; and as there were few that had it, so likewise 'twas very

very seldom ; and it shall now be enquir'd how the Prophets could be sure of those Things which they perceived only by the Strength of Imagination, and not by the certain Principles of mental Knowledge.

That the Prophets were not endued with a Perfection of Mind above other Men, but only with Strength and Vivacity of Imagination, the Scripture Histories abundantly testify. *Solomon* exceeded all others in Wisdom, but not in the Gift of Prophecy. *Heman, Darda, Kalcoll* were Men of great Wisdom, but no Prophets ; when plain Country-men, who had no Learning, nay *Women*, as *Hagar, Abraham's* Maid, had that Gift ; and this is agreeable both to Reason and Experience ; for they who most excel in Fancy and Imagination, are less apt to understand Things clearly ; and they who have excellent Understandings, have their Fancy and Imagination not so strong, but better kept within Compass, that it may not be confounded with the Intellect : Those Men, therefore, who endeavour, out of the Books of the Prophets, to find the true Knowledge of Natural and Spiritual Things, are extremely mistaken ; which it is necessary to shew, because the Times, Philosophy, and the Matter it self require

it. Nor shall I regard what Superstition can say to the contrary, which hates nothing more than such Men as live well and justly, and are Lovers of true and solid Knowledge ; for now they who freely confess they have no particular Idea of God, and only know him by created Beings, (of whose Causes they are ignorant) are presently branded with the Name of *Atheists*.

In order to this I shall shew, that there was a Difference between the Prophets, not only in respect of Imagination and Temperament of Body, but also in respect of the Opinions wherewith they were prepossess'd ; so that they never became more learned by Prophecy. But 'twill be requisite, first, to speak of the Certainty of the Prophets, because it will contribute to the Proof of what I design to demonstrate ; seeing Simple Imagination does not in it's own Nature include Certainty, as every clear and distinct Idea does ; there must necessarily some other Thing accompany Imagination, to make us sure of the Things we imagine ; and that is Reasoning : Whence it follows, that Prophecy of it self does not include Certainty, because it depends only upon the Imagination ; and therefore the Prophets themselves were not certain of what
God

God reveal'd by the Revelation it self, but by some Sign; as appears by *Abraham*, *Gen. chap. 15. v. 8.* *And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it;* asking a Sign after he heard the Promise. Without doubt he believ'd God, and did not ask the Sign, that he might believe, but that he might be sure the Promise came from God. The same thing more plainly appears by *Gideon*, *Judg. chap. 6. vers. 17.* *And he said unto him, if now I have found Grace in thy sight, then shew me a Sign that thou talkest with me.* *Hezekiah*, who well knew that *Isaiah* was a Prophet, ask'd a Sign of him, when he foretold his Recovery; which shews, that the Prophets had always some Sign, by which they were certain of the things they Prophetically imagined; and therefore *Moses*, *Deut. chap. 18. v. 22.* bids the People ask a Sign of any that pretend to Prophecy, which Sign was to be foretelling some future Event.

Prophecy therefore, in this particular, must give place to Natural Knowledge, which needs no Sign, but in it's own Nature includes Certainty; but the Certainty of Prophecy is not Mathematical, but only Moral, which also appears by Scripture; *Deut. chap. 13.* *Moses* warns the People, that if any Prophet shou'd teach
 them

them to worship any other God, tho' he confirm'd his Doctrine by Signs and Miracles, yet the Prophet was to be put to Death. *Christ*, in like manner, tells his Disciples there shou'd arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shou'd shew great Signs and Wonders; and *Ezek.* also declares, that God sometimes deceives Men with false Revelation, chap. 14. vers. 9.

Seeing then the Certainty of Prophecy, which depended upon Signs, was not Mathematical, (that is such as necessarily follows from the thing apprehended or seen) but only Moral; and that Signs were given to satisfy and convince the Prophet himself; it likewise follows, that Signs were given according to the Opinion and Capacity of the Prophet; so that the Sign which made one Person confident, and certain of his Prophecy, cou'd not assure another; as the Signs were different and various, so also did Revelation it self vary in every Prophet, according to the Disposition of his Imagination, the Temper of his Constitution, or the Opinion wherewith he was prepossess'd: (for Example) if a Prophet was chearful and merry, to him were reveal'd Victories and Peace, the Promoters of Mirth and Gladness; those Things generally employing the Fancy of such Men: To a
sad

sad and melancholly Man, were reveal-
 ed Wars, Plagues, and Evils to come :
 If a Prophet were Kind, Merciful, Cho-
 lorick, or Severe, accordingly were his
 Revelations. The Fancy of the Prophet
 was also sometimes the Cause that Revel-
 ation differ'd in Style ; for if the Prophet
 were of an elegant and exalted Fancy,
 the Mind of God was made known to
 him in an eloquent and lofty Style ; if
 the Prophet's Fancy was obscure and con-
 fus'd, his Revelations were likewise the
 same : When Revelations were made to
 a Country Rustick, the Signs represent-
 ed were Oxen, Cows, &c. to a Soldier,
 Captains and Armies ; to a Courtier, Pal-
 laces and Regal Thrones. Lastly, Prophe-
 cy vary'd according to the Opinions
 wherewith the Prophets were affected,
Mat. chap. 11. To the *Magi* addicted to
 Astrology, the Nativity of our Saviour
 was revealed by a Star appearing in the
East ; to the Dreamers or Prophets of
Nebuchadnezzar was reveal'd the Destruc-
 tion of *Jerusalem*, by inspecting the In-
 trails of Beasts : That King also under-
 stood it from Oracles, and the Shooting
 of Arrows into the Air. To Prophets,
 who believ'd Men had Free-Will, and
 acted according to their own Will and
 Choice, God revealed himself as indif-
 ferent

ferent and ignorant of Mens future Actions; all which Particulars shall be severally proved by Places of Scripture.

First, it appears by the 2d Book of Kings, chap. 3d. v. 15. that *Elisba*, before he prophesy'd to *Jehoram*, desired a *Minstrel* to play before him, and that till he was pleas'd with the Musick of the Instrument, he could not (because he was angry with the King) fortel what should happen; they who are angry with any Person, being inclin'd to imagine Evil rather than Good: But they are mistaken who say God is never reveal'd to Angry and Melancholly Persons; for to *Moses*, who was incens'd against *Pharoah*, without the help of any musical Instrument, was reveal'd that miserable Plague of the First-born. God was revealed to angry *Cain*; to angry and impatient *Ezekiel* was reveal'd the Misery and Obstinacy of the Jews, *Ezek.* chap. 3. v. 14. *Jeremy*, sad and weary of his Life, prophesy'd the Captivity of the Jews; so that *Josiah* wou'd not consult him, but sent to a Woman, *Hilkiab* the Prophetess, to whose milder Disposition the Mercy of God was more likely to be revealed, 2d Book of Chron. chap. 24. v. 22. *Michah* did never prophesy Good to *Ahab*, (as did some other Prophets in the First Book

Book of the Kings, chap. 20. v. 13.) but all his Life-time prophesy'd Evil; as plainly appears in the *First Book* of the *Kings*, chap. 22. v. 8. and more plainly in the *Second Book* of *Chron.* chap. 18. v. 7. The Prophets therefore, in respect of the different Temperaments of the Body, inclin'd to some Revelations more than to others. The Style also of Prophecy differ'd according to the Eloquence of ev'ry Prophet; the Prophecies of *Ezekiel* and *Amos* are written in a lower and less eloquent Style, than those of *Isaiah* and *Nahum*; and shou'd any one compare some Chapters of divers Prophets, upon the same Subject, what a Disparity wou'd they find in the Style? For instance, how different is the first Chapter of the Courtier *Isaiah* from the fifth Chapter of the Herdsman *Amos*; how superiour are the Order and Reasons of *Jeremiah* to the Order and Reasons of *Obadiah*; and also, how elegant and sublime is *Isaiah*, how low and unpolish'd *Hosea*? So that this being consider'd, it is very evident, that God had no peculiar Style of speaking; but, according to the Learning and Capacity of the Prophet, it was either eloquent, concise, sharp, rude, prolix, or obscure. Prophetical Representations and Hieroglyphicks were various; tho' they signify'd the same

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thing;

thing; for the Glory of God leaving the Temple was otherwise presented to *Isaiab* than it was to *Ezekiel*; the *Rabbins* would have both Representations to be the same, and that *Ezekiel*, being a Country-man, extraordinarily admired his own, and therefore described it with all its Circumstances; but unless they were assured the Thing were so indeed, we are not bound to believe them; for *Isaiab* saw Seraphims with six Wings, and *Ezekiel* Beasts, with four: *Isaiab* saw God clothed, and sitting upon a Throne; *Ezekiel* saw him like Fire; both of them, without doubt, saw God, but as each was wont to imagine. Representations also vary'd, not only in their Manner and Form, but in their Clearness and Perspicuity; for the Representations made to *Zachary* were so obscure, that they could not be understood by the Prophet himself, without Explication, as appears by the Story; and those of *Daniel*, tho' explain'd, were not understood by him; which happen'd not in respect of the Difficulty of the thing revealed, (for it concerned humane Affairs, which exceed not the Bounds of humane Capacity, but only as they are future) but because *Daniel* was not so well able to prophesy waking as in his sleep; which appears by his being so terrify'd

rify'd in the Beginning of the Revelation, that he was scarce able to stand; and therefore, through Weakness of Imagination, or want of Strength, Things were so obscurely represented to him, that he cou'd not understand them, tho' they were expounded. And here it is to be observed, that the Words which *Daniel* heard, were only imaginary; and therefore being at that Time so much troubled, it is not strange that he cou'd understand nothing by Words, which he so confusedly and obscurely imagined. Those Things therefore remained obscure, because at that Time there was no Man found, who so much excelled in the Strength and Power of Imagination, as to have a clearer Revelation made to him. There is no need of being larger upon this Head; for nothing is more manifest in Scripture, than that God did bestow upon some Prophets a much greater Portion of the Gift of Prophecy than he did upon others. And it is likewise farther plain, that Prophecy and Representations differ'd according to the Opinions which the Prophets maintain'd; and that Prophets were prejudiced with different, nay contrary Opinions; and that Prophecy never left the Prophets more learned, but in the Opinions

wherewith they were prepossess'd ; and for that Reason, in Things meerly speculative, no Man is obliged to believe them.

Many have perswaded themselves, that the Prophets knew all Things within the compass of humane Understanding ; and tho' there are several Places in Scripture that are entirely against this Opinion, yet they are rather willing to confess they do not understand them, than own the Prophets were ignorant of any thing ; or else they endeavour so to wrest the Text, that they would have it say that which it does not mean.

But if either of these be lawful, those Things which are most clear in Scripture are either to be reckoned among those which are obscure and unintelligible, or else to be interpreted as we please ; so that it will be impossible to prove any thing by it : For Example, nothing is more plain, than that *Josbua*, and he perhaps who wrote the Book of *Josbua*, did believe that the Sun moved about the Earth ; that the Earth had no Motion, and that the Sun for some Time stood still : Yet many, because they will not allow of any Mutations in the Heavens so expound that Place, that it shall not seem to intend any such thing ; but others, who think

think themselves better Philosophers, because they believe the Motion of the Earth round the Sun, do endeavour, all that they are able, to wrest the Proof of their Opinion out of the same Scripture, against the plain Meaning of it's Words. Is any Man obliged to believe that *Joshua*, a Soldier, was perfectly skill'd in Astronomy; or that the Light of the Sun cou'd not remain longer above the Horizon, than ordinary, unless *Joshua* understood the Cause thereof? Both seem to me ridiculous; and I had rather plainly say, that *Joshua* did not know the true Cause of that continuing Light, and that all the Army with him did think, that the Sun had a diurnal Motion about the Earth, and that its standing still that particular Day, was the true Cause of its longer shining; but did not understand that the great Abundance of Hail, which the 11th Verse of the 10th Chapter of *Joshua* says, was then in the Region of the Air, might cause a greater Refraction of Light than ordinary, or some other Thing of the like Nature, which is not our Business here to enquire.

Thus the Drowning of all Mankind was reveal'd to *Noah*, according to his Capacity; for he thought no Part of the World was inhabited but *Palestine*; and the

the Prophets, without any prejudice to their Piety, might be, nay were ignorant not only of Things of this Nature, but also of Matters of greater Consequence; for they discover'd very little of the Divine Attributes, but had mean and vulgar Opinions of God; to which their Revelations were accommodated; so that we may plainly see they were not so much commended for the Excellency and Sublimity of their Knowledge, as for their Piety, and Constancy of Mind.

Adam knew no other Attribute of God, than that he was the Maker of all Things. God was reveal'd to *Cain*, according to his Capacity, that is, as one ignorant of Humane Actions; nor did he need any higher Knowledge of God to repent of his Sin.

To *Laban*, God revealed himself as the God of *Abraham*, because *Laban* believed every Nation had a peculiar God. *Abraham* was ignorant of God's Ubiquity and Prescience; for as soon as he heard the Sentence against *Sodom*, he pray'd God that he wou'd not execute it, till he knew whether all deserved the Punishment; nor was God otherwise reveal'd to him; for in *Abraham's* Imagination, God said, *I will go down now and see whether they have done according to the Cry of it, which is*
come

come unto me ; and if not I will know, Gen. chap. 18. vers. 21. *Moses* did not know that God was omniscient, and that Humane Actions were governed by *his* Decrees ; for tho' God told him, *Exod.* chap. 3. v. 8. that the *Israelites* wou'd hearken to his Voice ; yet *Moses* doubted, and said in the 1st Verse of the 4th Chapter, *What if they will not believe me, nor hearken to my Voice ?* And therefore God was revealed to him as indifferent, and ignorant of Mens future Actions ; and indeed *Moses* has declared no more of the Nature of God, than that he was very merciful, kind, and very jealous ; as appears in many Places of the *Pentateuch* : He believed, and taught also, that he was invisible, not that he thought beholding him was in it self impossible.

Another of the Doctrines of *Moses* was, that this *Being*, out of a *Chaos*, brought this visible World into Form and Order ; that he furnished Nature with the Seeds of all things ; and therefore hath absolute Power and Authority over all Things : And by that absolute Power chose the *Jewish* Nation for himself, and appointed a particular Place of the Earth for *their* Habitation : But other Nations and Countries, he left to the Care of other Gods, substituted by him ; and therefore God
was

was called the *God of Israel*, and the *God of Jerusalem*; and other Gods were called the *Gods of the Nations*.

Now, if we carefully observe the Revelations of *Moses*, we shall find them suited and fitted to those Conceptions and Opinions he had of God: And in *Exodus*, we read, that *Moses* desired to see God; but because *Moses*, as hath been already said, had formed, in his Imagination, no Figure or Likeness of God, and as God was not revealed to the Prophets, but according to the Disposition of their Fancy and Imagination, therefore God appeared to him under no Image or Similitude; and the Reason of it was, because 'twas repugnant, and contrary to the Imagination of *Moses*. The *Israelites* knew very little of God, tho' he was revealed to them, as was sufficiently manifested by their bestowing on a Calf the Honour and Worship due to God, and by saying to that Calf, *These are thy Gods, O Israel, that brought thee out of the Land of Egypt*. Nor is it to be believ'd, that Men accusom'd to the Superstitions of *Egypt*, ignorant, and broken to the Yoke of a tedious Bondage, should have any right Understanding of God, or that *Moses* shou'd teach them any thing more than a peculiar Manner and Way of living; not instructing

structing them as a Philosopher, to make
 living well their free and voluntary Choice,
 but as a Legislator, compelling them by
 the Commands and Power of Law ; so
 that a good Life, the Love and Service of
 God, was to them rather Servitude than
 true Liberty, or the Grace and Gift of
 God ; for *Moses* commanded them to love
 God, and keep his Law ; that they might
 acknowledge their Deliverance out of *E-*
gypt, to be by God, he terrify'd them with
 Threatnings in case they transgress'd it,
 and promis'd them many Blessings if they
 carefully observ'd it: So that he dealt with
 the *Israelites*, as Parents use to do with
 their Children ; which is an Evidence,
 that they were ignorant of the Excellency
 of Virtue, and of the Nature and Rea-
 lity of Happiness. *Jonas* thought he
 cou'd fly from the Presence of God, which
 imply'd, that he also believ'd God had
 substituted other Powers to take care of
 those Countries and Nations which were
 not within the Territories of *Judea*. In
 all the *Old Testament*, we read of no Per-
 son who spoke so rationally of God as *So-*
lomon, who for Natural Knowledge ex-
 celled all the Men of his Time ; and
 therefore thought himself above the Law,
 (which was only given to those who
 wanted the Dictates of Reason and Na-

tural Understanding) and slighted the Observance of those Laws which particularly concerned him, as he was King; and consisted in three Particulars, as may be seen, *Deut.* chap. 17. v. 16, 17. But to return to the Prophets: The *Rabbins*, who have left us the Books of the Prophets, now extant, found the Opinions of *Ezekiel* so contrary to those of *Moses*, that they were near resolving not to receive the Book of *Ezekiel* for Canonical, and had condealed it, if a certain Person call'd *Hananiah* had not undertaken to expound it; so that 'tis not certain whether it were a Commentary he wrote, and was perhaps lost, or that he changed and glossed upon *Ezekiel's* Words and Discourses, according to his own Fancy; however it was, the 17th Chapter of *Ezekiel* doth not seem to agree with the 34th Chapter of *Exodus*, v. 7. nor with the 32d Chapter of *Jeremy*, v. 18. *Samael* believed, that when God had decreed any thing, he never repented or changed that Decree, 1st Book of *Samuel*, chap. 14. vers. 29. When *Saul* repented of his Sin, and desired to worship God, *Samael* told him God wou'd not change his Decree; but the contrary was revealed to *Jeremiah*: For, whenever God decreed Good or Evil to any Nation, if Men became either

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better or worse, before the Execution of the Sentence, God did accordingly alter his Decree, *Jer.* chap. 18. v. 8, 10. The Prophet *Joel* believed God repented of the Evil which he at any Time decreed, *Joel*, chap. 2. vers. 13. In the 4th Chapter of *Genesis*, vers. 7. it clearly appears it is in Man's Power to overcome evil Temptations, and to live well, by what God said to *Cain*; who, notwithstanding, as we find in Scripture and *Josephus*, never subdued his Passions. By the fore-cited Text in *Jeremy*, we may conclude, that God changes his Purpose of doing either Good or Evil, according to Mens living well or wickedly; yet on the contrary, *St. Paul* teaches nothing more plainly, than that Men have no Power over themselves, against the Temptations and Lusts of the Flesh, but by the particular Mercy and Election of God, as may be seen in the 9th Chapter of the *Romans*; and in the 3d Chapter, vers. 3d, where asking whether God be unrighteous in taking Vengeance, he corrects himself in speaking after that manner like a Man.

From what has been said, we may easily see, that the Prophets might be, and were indeed ignorant of Things meerly speculative; that they were also of very different Opinions, and consequently in

the Knowledge of Natural and Spiritual Things, we are not to rely and ground our Faith upon them, but believe as our Reason and Conscience dictate.

Nor were the *Jews* superiour to other Nations, in those Things wherein the Happiness of Man's Life consists; for in respect of Knowledge and Virtue, which is true Happiness, God was equally gracious to all Men, as is evident in Scripture; for the Psalmist says, the 145th Ps. vers. 18. *The Lord is near unto all them that call upon him in Truth*; also v. 9. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works*. Psal. 33. v. 15. *he fashions Mens Hearts alike*: The meaning of which Expression is, that God gives to all Mankind the same Intellect; for among the *Jews* the Heart was believed to be the Seat of the Soul and Understanding. It appears, *Job*, Chap. 28. v. 28. that the Law prescribed by God, to all Mankind, was to fear the Lord and depart from Evil, and to do well; and therefore *Job*, tho' a *Gentile*, was very acceptable to God, and excelled in Religion and Piety: We then conclude, that every particular *Jew*, consider'd as a Person out of that Common-wealth and Government, had no Gift of God above other Men, nor was there any difference between a

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Jew and a *Gentile*. And farther, if God be equally good and gracious to all Men, and that the Duty and Office of a Prophet was not so much to instruct Men in the particular Laws of their Country, as to teach them the Way to good and virtuous Living; there is no doubt but all Nations had their Prophets, and that the Gift of Prophecy was not peculiar to the *Jews*, which is prov'd by profane as well as sacred History.

Though in the sacred Histories of the *Old Testament*, it does not plainly appear, that other Nations had so many Prophets as the *Jews*, or that any *Gentile* Prophet was expressly sent by God to other Nations; nothing is to be inferred from thence, because the *Jews* only took care to write the History of their own Affairs, and not that of other Nations. It is enough, that in the *Old Testament*, we find that *Gentiles* and Men uncircumcis'd, as *Noah*, *Enoch*, *Abimelech*, and *Balaam*, did prophesy; and that also the Jewish Prophets did not only prophesy to their own People, but to other Nations likewise. *Ezekiel* prophesy'd to all the Nations known in his Time; and *Obadiah*, for ought we know, to none but the *Edomites*. *Jonah* was a Prophet, chiefly to the *Ninevites*. *Isaiah* did not only lament and foretell the Calamities, and prophesy the Restauration of the *Jews*,
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but also of other Nations ; for he saith, Chap. 16. v. 9. *Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer.* In Chap. 19. he first foretells the Calamities, and after the Restauration of the Egyptians ; he tells them God wou'd send them a Saviour, and wou'd deliver them ; that God wou'd be known to them, and that they shou'd worship God by Sacrifices and Oblations ; and lastly, he calls Egypt *the blessed People of God* ; all which is very worthy of our Observation. Nor was Jeremiah only a Prophet to the Jews, but was in express Terms called the Prophet of the Nations, Jer. chap. 1. v. 5. *Before thou camest forth out of the Womb, I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a Prophet unto the Nations* ; he prophetically bewailed and foretold the Restauration of other Nations : He says, Chap. 48. vers. 31. *Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab ;* and vers. 36. *Therefore my Heart shall sound for Moab like Pipes* : And afterwards foretells the Restauration of the Egyptians, the Amonites, and Elamites. Without Question then other Nations had their Prophets as well as the Jews, tho' the Scripture mentions only Balaam, to whom was revealed what shou'd befall other Nations as well as the Jews ; yet we are not to believe that Balaam never prophesied, till he

he was sent for by *Balack*; it appears by the Story that he was famous for Prophecy, and other Divine Endowments; for *Balack* said to him, *I know he whom thou blestest is blest'd, and he whom thou curstest is curs'd*; so that he had the same Power and Virtue, which God, Gen. chap. 12. v. 3. bestow'd upon *Abraham*. *Balaam* also answered *Balack's* Messenger, as one accustomed to Prophecy; for he bid them stay all Night till the Word of God was revealed to him. When he prophesied, or made known what was truly the Mind and Will of God, he us'd to say these Words, *He hath said who heard the Word of God, and knew the Knowledge of the most High, who saw the Vision of the Almighty; falling into a Trance, but having his Eyes open*. Lastly, after he had, by God's Command, blest'd the *Israelites*, he began as he was wont to prophesy of other Nations, foretelling what shou'd happen to them in Time to come; all which fully proves, that he had been always a Prophet, or had often prophesied; and what is further to be observ'd, that he likewise had that which made the Prophets certain of the Truth of their Prophecy, an honest and good Mind.

As for God's being angry with him, it was no more than happen'd to *Moses*, when

when by God's Command he went into Egypt, *Exod. Chap. 4. v. 24.* where it is said, *the Lord met him and sought to kill him.* His taking Money to prophesy was no more than was done by *Samuel*, 1st Book of *Sam. chap. 9. v. 7, 8.* Certainly the Prayers of *Balaam* were very prevalent, seeing 'tis so often recorded in Scripture, that for a Testimony of God's Mercy to the *Israelites*, he refused to hear *Balaam*, and turned his Curses into a Blessing; so that without Question he was a Person very acceptable to God, who never is moved with the Prayers or Curses of wicked Men. Seeing therefore *Balaam* was a true Prophet, and that notwithstanding *Joshua* calls him a *South-sayer*, yet that Name was sometimes taken in a good Sense; and those that the *Gentiles* called *Augurs* or *Diviners*, were true Prophets; and those that the Scripture condemns for false Diviners were they that deceived the Nations, as the false Prophets did the *Jews*; which plainly appears out of other Places of Scripture; we therefore conclude, that the Gift of Prophecy was not peculiar to the *Jews*, but common to all Nations.

Now if we carefully consider the Doctrine which *St. Paul* chiefly design'd to maintain, we shall find that he is perfectly of the Opinion, that God was not only revealed

revealed to the *Jews* ; for he says, vers. 29. of Chap. 3d. *Is he the God of the Jews only, is he not also of the Gentiles?* and Chap. 2. v. 25, 26. he says, *if the Circumcis'd break the Law, Circumcision is made Uncircumcision; and if the Uncircumcis'd keep the Righteousness of the Law, shall not his Uncircumcision be counted for Circumcision?* 'Tis evident then, that the Law was absolutely revealed to all Mankind, (under which all Men lived;) that *universal* Law, which obliges all Men to live a virtuous and good Life; and not that *particular* Law, which was ordain'd for the Constitution and Advantage of any single Government, and was suited to the Disposition of only one particular People.

But having said enough on this Head, I purpose now to treat of Ceremonies, and the Belief of Scripture Histories: And here I think it is manifest, that since the Divine Law, which makes Men happy, and teaches the right Way of Living, is universal to all Mankind, and so derived from Humane Nature, that it appears to be born with us, and as it were engraven on our Hearts and Minds; at least those Ceremonies, which we find in the *Old Testament*, and were only instituted for the *Jews*, and so fitted to their Government, that for the most part they might be ob-

served in their publick Assemblies (tho' not by ev'ry individual Person) did not belong to the Divine Law, nor contributed any thing to the making Men the more happy or virtuous, but concerned only the Election of the *Jews*, the temporal Happiness of the Body, and Peace of their Government ; and consequently cou'd be of no longer Use than while their Government lasted. If those Ceremonies in the *Old Testament* had any relation to God's Law, it was only because they were instituted by Revelation, or upon revealed Principles ; and I will shew from Scripture, upon what Account, and in what Manner, Ceremonies were useful to the Establishment and Preservation of the *Jewish Common-wealth*.

The Prophet *Isaiah* very plainly declares that by the Divine Law is meant that Universal Law, which consists in living uprightly, not in Ceremonies ; he calls upon the People to hear the Law of God, but tells them that God hated their Sacrifices and Oblations, their New Moons, their Feasts and their Sabbaths, and that the Law it self was comprehended in a few Particulars ; namely, in an upright Heart, in Virtue, and relieving the Oppress'd ; and no less clear is what *David* says in the 40th Psalm, vers. 7, 8. *Sacrifice and Offer-*

ing thou didst not desire, mine Ears hast thou opened; Burnt-offerings and Sin-offerings hast thou not required: I delight to do thy Will, O my God, for thy Law is within my Heart: Here David calls that the Law of God, which is written in his Heart, or inward Parts, separated from Ceremonies; which not being in their own Nature good, are not written in our Minds. And that Ceremonies conduce not to our true Happiness, but respect only the Temporary Prosperity of Government, appears likewise by the Scripture, which for the Observation of Ceremonies, promis'd only bodily Benefits; but for keeping the Universal Divine Law, true Felicity. In the Books commonly call'd *The Five Books of Moses*, nothing is promis'd but temporal Prosperity; namely Honour, Fame, Victory, Riches, Pleasures and Health; and tho' in those Five Books are contain'd, beside Ceremonies, many Things that are moral, yet they are not there contain'd as Moral Doctrines and Universal Instructions, common to all, but as Commands and Precepts fitted to the particular Capacity and Genius of the Jewish Nation, and such as concerned the prosperous State of that Government; for *Moses* did not teach the *Jews* as a Doctor and Prophet, but commanded them as a Law-giver and

Prince, that they shou'd not kill or steal; nor does he prove this as a Doctrine, by Reason, but to his Commands adds Punishments, which according to the Disposition of every Nation, as we find by Experience, may, and ought to vary: The Commandment of not committing Adultery, respected only the Prosperity of the Common-wealth, and its Government; for had it been a Moral Doctrine, which concerned the Peace of the Mind, as well as of the Common-wealth, and every particular Man's true Felicity, it wou'd have as much condemn'd the inward Concupiscence of the Heart, as the outward Act of Lust, as our Saviour did, *Mat. chap. 5. vers. 28.* whose Doctrines were universal, and therefore the Rewards which he promis'd were spiritual and not corporal; for *Christ* was sent not to ordain Laws and establish Government, but only to preach and teach the Universal Divine Law: And hereby we understand *Christ* did not abrogate the Law of *Moses*, seeing he introduc'd no new Laws into the Jewish Common-wealth, but preached only Moral Doctrine, which he distinguish'd from the Laws of the Common-wealth, because the *Pharisees* were so ignorant that they thought every one lived righteously who kept the Law of *Moses*, which (as has been

been already said) concerned only that Common-wealth, and serv'd rather to compel than instruct the Jews: There are other Places of Scripture, which for the Observance of Ceremonies, promise nothing but bodily Benefits; but for the keeping of the Universal Divine Law, true Beatitude.

In this point, none of all the Prophets speaks so plainly as *Isaiah*, chap. 58. for after condemning Hypocrisy, and commending Liberty and Charity towards themselves and their Neighbours, which are Virtues dictated to us by the Universal Divine Law, he says, verse 8. *Then shall thy Light break out as the Morning, and thy Health shall spring forth speedily; thy Righteousness shall go before thee; the Glory of the Lord shall be thy Reward:* Afterwards he recommends to them the keeping of the Sabbath; and for their Care in observing it, he promises, verse 24, *Then shalt thou delight thy self in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high Place of the Earth, and feed thee with the Heritage of Jacob thy Father, for the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it;* by which we plainly see, that the Prophet promis'd, to the Practice of the Divine Natural Law, a spiritual Reward, a sound Mind in a healthful Body, and the Glory of God after Death; but to the
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Observation of Ceremonies, nothing but the prosperous Continuance of their Government, and bodily Happiness. In the 24th and 25th *Psalms*, no mention is made of Ceremonies, but only of Moral Duties, because those *Psalms* treat of nothing but true Happiness and Beatitude, tho' parabolically propounded; for 'tis certain that God's Holy Hill, his Tabernacle, and dwelling in them, with other Blessings mention'd there, cou'd not literally signify the Mountain of *Jerusalem*, or the Tabernacle of *Moses*; for they were inhabited by none but the Tribe of *Levi*, who ministred in the Tabernacle and Temple. Moreover, all the Sayings of *Solomon*, concerning the Excellency of Wisdom and Knowledge, promise true Felicity, because they teach us to know and fear God: That the *Jews*, after the Destruction of their Government, were not bound to the Observation and Practice of Ceremonies, is evident by the Prophet *Jeremy*, who foretelling the approaching Destruction of the City of *Jerusalem*, chap. 9. v. 23, 24. declares, that none are acceptable to God, but they who know him, and understand that he exercises Loving-Kindness, Judgment and Righteousness in the Earth, and that he will delight in none but those who have Knowledge of these Things; as if
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the Prophet had said, that after the Destruction of the City, God would for the future require nothing else of the *Jews*, but the Observation of the Natural Law, obligatory to all Mankind. The *New Testament* likewise proves the same thing, for it teaches only Moral Doctrines, and promises, to the Practice of them, the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Apostles, after the Gospel began to be preach'd to Nations, that were not oblig'd to the Laws of the Jewish Commonwealth, entirely left off Ceremonies; and if the *Pharisees*, after the Destruction of their Government, retained any, or the greatest Part of them, it was more to oppose the Christians than to please God; for after the Sacking of the City, when the *Jews* were carry'd Captive into *Babylon*, and were not (for ought we know) divided into Sects, they presently neglected Ceremonies, bid farewell to the whole Law of *Moses*, forgot even the Laws of their own Country, as superfluous, and mixed themselves with the rest of the Nations, as appears out of *Esdra*s and *Nehemiah*: Therefore, without doubt, the *Jews*, after their Government was dissolved, were no more bound by the Law of *Moses*, than they were before they became a Commonwealth; for while they lived
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among other Nations, before their going out of *Egypt*, they had no peculiar Law, nor were oblig'd to any but the Natural Law, observing also the Laws of the Country and Nation where they lived, which were not repugnant to the Divine Natural Law ; and tho' the Patriarchs offer'd Sacrifices to God, it was not that they were commanded so to do by any Divine Precept, or instructed by the Universal Law of Nature, but only because it had been a Custom from the Time of *Enoch*, to offer Sacrifices to incite and testify their Devotion. The End and Design then of Ceremonies among the *Jews* (who being a stupid People, and depraved in their Understanding, were unfit to make good and prudent Laws, or to govern themselves by their own democratical Authority) was, that they might do nothing by their own Will and Determination, but only by the Command of another, and that by continual Action and Meditation, they might confess they were not in the least Masters of themselves. By all which it is evident, that Ceremonies conduce nothing to true Felicity ; and that those of the *Old Testament*, nay the whole Law of *Moses*, concerned only the Government of the *Jews*, and consequently had respect to nothing more than bodily

dily Conveniencies: As for Christian Ceremonies, namely, *Baptism*, the *Lord's Supper*, *Holy-Days*, *Publick Forms of Prayer*, or any others common to Christianity, if they were ever instituted by Christ and his Apostles, (which does not clearly appear) they were only appointed as Marks or Signs of the Universal Church, but not as Things that contain any Sanctity in themselves, or contribute any thing to eternal Happiness; and therefore being ordain'd, not in Reference to Government, but only in respect to mutual Society, he who lives alone, or he who lives in a Government where the Christian Religion is forbidden, is not obliged to the Observation of these Ceremonies, and yet may live happily; an Example whereof we have in the Kingdom of *Japan*, where the *Hollanders*, by the Command of their *East-India Company*, abstain from all outward Worship; and that their doing so is justifiable, I think is not difficult to prove from the fundamental Principles of the *New Testament*.

Thus far of Ceremonies: I shall now say something of Miracles, which are, to the generality of Mankind, a clearer Proof of the Power and Providence of God, than all the Works of Nature beside; who by taking away Natural Causes, and

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imagining Things out of the Order of Nature, think God is most ador'd, when all Things are immediately referr'd to his Will, and that his Power is at no Time so wonderful, as when, according to their Fancy, it conquers and subdues the Power of Nature; but to shew that they have no just or right Conception of God or his Works, I shall prove, *1st*, That nothing *can* happen contrary to Nature, whose Order and Course is eternal, constant, and immutable; and shall likewise explain what a Miracle is. *2^d*. That we cannot know the Essence, Existence, nor consequently the Providence of God, by Miracles, but that they more manifestly appear in the regular and unchangeable Order of Nature. *3^d*. That the Scripture it self, by the Decrees, Purposes, and Providence of God, means nothing but *that* regular Course of Nature, which necessarily follows from its eternal Laws; and, lastly, how Scripture Miracles are to be interpreted, and what we are principally to observe in the Relations we have of Miracles.

The first Particular is proved thus; namely, that whatsoever God *Wills* and *Decrees*, implies eternal Verity and Necessity; for the Knowledge of God is not distinguish'd from his Will; and we say the same thing when we say God *wills* and

and *knows* any thing, because by the same Necessity derived from the Nature and Perfection of God, whereby he knows any thing to be what it is, by the same Necessity must God will that Thing to be what it is : But since nothing is necessarily true, but what is so by the Will and Decree of God, it clearly follows, that the Universal Laws of Nature are the very Ordinances of God, which flow from the Necessity and Perfection of his Divine Nature; whatever therefore comes to pass in Nature, which is repugnant to its Universal Laws, that must necessarily be contrary to the Decree and Knowledge of the Divine Nature : Or, shou'd any one conclude, that God does any thing against the Laws of Nature, he likewise must grant, that God acts contrary to his own Nature, which is the greatest of Absurdities. As therefore nothing happens in Nature contrary to its Universal Laws, so neither does any thing happen which does not agree with and follow from them, for whatever is done, is done by the Will and eternal Decree of God, (that is) according to Laws and Rules which imply eternal Verity and Necessity; and therefore, though the Laws in which are contain'd eternal Verity and Necessity, be not known to us, yet Nature always observes them, and

consequently keeps her constant and unchangeable Course : No rational Man can believe the Power and Virtue of Nature to be limited, and its Laws confin'd to some particular Operations and Effects, and not fitted universally to all ; for since the Power and Virtue of Nature is the very Virtue and Power of God, we ought to believe the Power of Nature infinite, and the Laws of Nature so general, that they extend themselves to all Things which fall under the Comprehension of the Divine Knowledge ; otherwise it must be granted, that God created Nature so weak and impotent, and its Laws and Rules so defective, that to preserve and maintain Nature, he must, upon every new Occasion, assist and succour it, that Things may fall out according to his Will ; which is very irrational to suppose. If then nothing happens in Nature, which does not follow from its Laws and Rules, if its Laws are extended to all Things within the compass of Divine Knowledge, and if Nature keeps a fix'd immutable and regular Course ; it is manifest, that whatever Men call a Miracle, is only so in respect of their Opinions, and signifies nothing else but some Work or Thing done, of which we cannot discover the Natural Cause by an Example of any Thing that ordinarily happens like it, at least

least the Person cannot, who relates or records the Miracle. I might call that a Miracle, whose Cause cannot be made out from any Natural Principle known by the Light of Nature; but because Miracles were wrought according to the Capacity of the Vulgar, who knew not the Principles of Natural Things; it is certain, that the Ancients esteem'd that a Miracle which they cou'd not explain, as the common People use to do Natural Things, namely, by recurring to their Memory for bringing to Mind some other Thing of the like kind, which they did not admire; for the common People imagine they understand a thing very well, when they do not admire it. By this Rule, and no other, Men in old and later Times have judg'd of Miracles; and it is not to be doubted, many Things are related in Scripture as Miracles, whose Causes might have been made manifest from the known Principles of Natural Things; as has been observ'd where we spoke of the Sun's standing still in the Time of *Joshua*, and its going backward in the Time of *Hezekiah* on the Dial of *Abaz*.

I shall now proceed to prove the second Particular, namely, that we cannot by Miracles understand the Essence, Existence, or Providence of God, but that they
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are more clearly apprehended by us in the fix'd and immutable Order of Nature ; for if the Existence of God be not of it self known to us, it must then be made out and concluded from Notions, whose Verity is so firm and unshaken, that there cannot be a Power by which those Notions may be changed, at least they ought to appear so to us at that Time, when from them we conclude the Existence of God, if we will have that Existence to be indubitable. For cou'd we think those Notions mutable by any Power, whatever it be, then might we doubt of the Truth of those Notions, and consequently of our Conclusion, namely, God's Existence ; nor cou'd we be certain of any thing. And seeing we cannot know what is congruous or contrary to Nature, but that which we prove to be congruous or contrary to those prime Notions ; if we cou'd conceive any thing in Nature to be done by any other Power whatever, contrary to Nature, that must also be contrary to those first Notions, and so be rejected as absurd, and against Reason, or else we must doubt of our prime Notions, and consequently of God, and all Things else.

Miracles therefore, in what manner soever we apprehend them, as they are understood

derstood to be Works contrary to the Order of Nature, are far from proving God's Existence ; they rather bring it into question ; for without Miracles we may be assur'd of it, namely, by knowing that all Things observe the certain and immutable Order of Nature. But allowing that to be a Miracle which cannot be explain'd and made known by Natural Causes, we ought then either to conclude that it has Natural Causes, but such as cannot be found out by humane Understanding ; or that it has no immediate Cause, except God or his Will. But if all things which are affected by Natural Causes, are done only by the Power and Will of God, we must necessarily at last come to this, that whether a Miracle has Natural Causes or not, it is a Work which cannot be manifested by a Natural Cause ; that is, 'tis a Work which exceeds humane Capacity ; and from a Work that exceeds humane Understanding, we can understand and collect nothing ; for whatever we clearly and distinctly understand, we do it by the Thing it self, or some other ; and that which is clearly and distinctly understood by it self, ought to be perfectly known to us. Therefore by a Miracle, or any Work exceeding humane Capacity, we cannot conceive God's Essence or Existence, nor can

can we absolutely understand any thing of God and Nature. But, on the contrary, when we know all Things to be ordain'd and establish'd by God, and that the Operations of Nature necessarily flow from the Essence of God, and that the Laws of Nature are the eternal Decrees and Purposes of God, it must necessarily be concluded, that we so much the better know God and his Will, by how much the better we understand and know Natural Things; how they depend on their first Cause, and how they operate according to the eternal Laws of Nature: So that in respect of our Understanding, with much more reason are those Works to be call'd the Works of God and his Will, which we clearly and distinctly understand, than those of which we are totally ignorant, tho' they strangely affect our Imagination and cause our Wonder; because only these Works of Nature, which we clearly and distinctly know, render our Knowledge of God more sublime, and more evidently declare his Will and Decrees: So that they do but trifle, who when they do not understand a thing, presently refer it to the Will of God, and ridiculously betray their own Ignorance. Moreover, whatever we conclude from Miracles, yet the Existence of God cannot in any manner

ner be concluded from them ; for since a Miracle is a limited Work, and expresses only a certain and limited Power, we cannot from such an Effect, conclude the Existence of a Cause, whose Power is infinite but only of a Cause, whose Power at most is greater than that Effect ; I say at most, because from many concurring Causes, there may follow an Effect, whose Virtue and Power may be less than all the Causes together, and yet much greater than the Power of any one of those Causes taken single ; but because the Laws of Nature extend themselves to Things infinite, being conceiv'd by us under a kind of Eternity and Nature, by them proceeds in a certain and unchangeable Course ; so far do those Laws in some Measure declare to us the Eternity and Immutability of God ; and therefore we conclude, that neither God's Being nor Providence can be known by Miracles, but may much better be concluded from the fix'd and unalterable Course of Nature.

I speak now of a Miracle, as it is taken for a Work that is above humane Capacity, or believed to be so ; for as it is supposed to be a Work that interrupts or perverts the Order of Nature, or is repugnant to its Laws, it is so far from giving us any Knowledge of God, that it takes away
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that which we naturally have, and makes us doubt of God and all other Things; nor do I know any difference between a Thing done contrary to Nature, and that which is done above it, that is (as some explain themselves) a thing which is not done contrary to the Order of Nature, but yet is not effected and produc'd by Nature; for seeing a Miracle is not wrought out of Nature but within the compass of it, tho' it be concluded to be above Nature, yet it must necessarily interrupt its Order, which by the Decrees of God we conceiv'd to be fix'd and immutable; and whatever is done in Nature which does not follow from the Rules of Nature, that must necessarily be repugnant to that Order, which God to all Eternity by Universal Laws establish'd in Nature; and consequently being against Nature and its Laws, the believing it must bring all Things into doubt, and lead us to *Atheism*. So that by what has been said we may conclude a Miracle, whether contrary to Nature or above it, to be a meer Absurdity; and that by a Miracle nothing can be understood in Scripture but a Work of Nature, which is indeed above Humane Understanding, or at least believ'd to be so.

We shall now shew that the Commands and Decrees of God, and consequently his Providence,

Providence, are indeed nothing else but the regular Course of Nature, that is, when the Scripture says any thing was done by God, or the Will of God, nothing more is to be understood, than that it was done according to the Order and Rules of Nature, and not as the common People imagine, that Nature was idle, and ceas'd from Action; or that the Order of Nature was for some Time interrupted. The Scripture does not give us the true Knowledge of Things which do not concern its Doctrine, because it meddles not with demonstrating Things by their Natural Causes, or with Things that are meerly speculative; and therefore to prove by consequence what we intend, we will quote some Scripture Histories, whose Relations are fullest of Circumstances. In the first Book of *Samuel*, chap. 9. v. 15, 16. it is said, that God told *Samuel* in his Ear, that he wou'd send *Saul* to him, and yet God did not send him as Men us'd to send Messengers one to another, but this Mission of God was nothing but the Order and Course of Nature; for *Saul* sought his Father's lost *Asses*, and thinking he shou'd not find them, by Advice of his Father's Servant, he went to the Prophet *Samuel* to know if he could tell him where they were; nor

does it appear any where in the whole relation, that *Saul* had any particular Command from God besides this natural Course to go to *Samuel*. *Psal.* 105. v. 24, 'tis said that God turn'd the Hearts of the *Egyptians* to hate the *Israelites*, which turning was natural, as appears by the first Chapter of *Exodus*, where very good Reasons are given for the *Egyptians* keeping the *Israelites* in Subjection. In the 9th Chapter of *Genesis*, v. 13. God says to *Noah*, that he wou'd set his Bow in the Cloud which Action of God ; was nothing but the Reflection and Refraction of the Sun Beams in the Minute Drops of Rain Water. *Psal.* 147. v. 18. the Natural Operation and Warmth of the Wind, by which Frost and Snow are melted, is called the Word of God, and v. 15. the Wind is called the Commandment of God. *Psal.* 104. v. 4. the Wind and the Fire are called the Messengers and Ministers of God ; and many other like Places in Scripture clearly shew that the Decree, the Command, the Saying and Word of God, are nothing else but the Operation and Order of Nature ; and without doubt many Things which are related in Scripture, and attributed to God, naturally come to pass, because it was not the Intent of Scripture to give

us an Account of Things by their natural Causes, but only to relate those Things which strongly possess the Imagination, and in such a Manner and Style as were most likely to cause Admiration, and fill Mens Minds with Devotion. If then we find in Scripture some Things, of whose natural Causes we are ignorant, or that seem to have happen'd against the Order of Nature, we are not presently to doubt, but believe that what did really happen came to pass by the Course of Nature, which is confirm'd by the many Circumstances that accompany'd Miracles, tho' the Circumstances were not particularly related, or were at least poetically related: I say, that the Circumstances clearly prove, that the Miracles required, and had Natural Causes. When the *Egyptians* were to be smitten with the Plague of Boils, *Moses* was to cast up and sprinkle Ashes in the Air, *Exod.* chap. 9. v. 10. The Locusts also, by God's Natural Command, namely, by an East Wind blowing a whole Day and Night, cover'd the Land of *Egypt*, and left it again with a strong West Wind, *Exod.* chap. 10. v. 13, 19. By the Command of God a Way was made thro' the Sea for the *Jews*, by an East Wind that blew a whole Night, *Exod.* chap. 14. v. 21. When the Prophet *Elisha*

was to raise the Child, thought to be dead, he several Times stretch'd himself upon the Body, till he grew warm and open'd his Eyes, 2d Book of *Kings*, chap. 4. v. 34, 35. So also in the 9th Chapter of St. *John's* Gospel, some Circumstances are mention'd, which our Saviour us'd when he cured the blind Man.

Many other Things are related in Scripture, which all declare, that Miracles require somewhat more than the absolute Command of God; and therefore, tho' all the Circumstances of Miracles, and their Natural Causes, be not always particularly express'd, yet we ought to believe, that Miracles were not wrought without them; which appears by the 4th Chap. of *Exod.* v. 27. where it is said, that only upon the stretching out the Hand of *Moses*, the Sea return'd again to its full Strength, without making mention of any Wind; yet in the 15th Chap. of *Exod.* v. 10. it is said *Thou didst blow with thy Wind*, (that is a strong Wind) and the Sea cover'd them; so that this Circumstance was omitted in the Story, to make the Miracle appear the greater; but if any one shou'd object that we find many Things in Scripture, which cannot in Appearance be explain'd by Natural Causes, as that the Sins of Men may be the Cause of the Earth's Barrenness,

Barrenness, and their Prayers the Cause of its Fertility; that Faith may give Sight to the Blind; with other Things of the like Nature in the *Old and New Testament*; I shall observe, that these Expressions signify no more than do those by which God is said to be angry or griev'd with our Sins, that he repents of the Good he hath done or intended, and that God by seeing a Sign call'd to mind his Promise; all which are spoken poetically, or according to the Opinions and Prejudices of the Writers: So that we may absolutely conclude, that all Things which the Scripture relates to have happen'd, did happen (as all Things do) agreeable to the Laws of Nature; and if in Scripture there be any thing recorded, which by plain and evident Demonstration, may be prov'd to be repugnant to the Laws of Nature, or impossible to follow from them, we ought not to believe it was inserted by Sacrilegious Men; for whatever is against Nature is against Reason, and whatever is against Reason, ought to be rejected as absurd.

Nothing now remains on this Head, but only to say somewhat of interpreting Miracles, or rather to recollect what has been already said; which is the fourth Particular I was to treat of.

That

That no Body by mistaking a Miracle, may think there is something in Scripture which is contrary to the Light of Nature, it seldom happens that Men relate any Thing that comes to pass so nakedly and truly, but that to their Relations they still add something of their own Conceits, to make it suit with their own preconceiv'd Opinions. In the Time of *Joshua*, when the *Jews* believ'd that the Sun was carry'd about the Earth by a Diurnal Motion, and that the Earth did not move at all; they fitted the Miracle which happen'd when they fought against the five Kings, according to this their preconceiv'd Opinion, and did not say simply that the Day was longer than ordinary, but that the Sun and Moon stood still, or ceas'd from Motion; which at that Time serv'd as a very good Argument to convince the Heathen who worship'd the Sun, that their God, the Sun, was under the Power of another Deity, who could, at his Pleasure, make him change his Course; and therefore, partly out of Religion, and partly from the Opinion with which they were prepossess'd, they apprehended and related the Thing much otherwise than indeed it was. Therefore to explain Miracles, and to understand

derstand by their Relations how Things did truly and really happen, it is necessary to know the Opinions of those who first reported the Miracles, or left them in Writing, and to distinguish their Opinions, from that which was represented to them by their Senses, else we may confound their Judgments and Opinions with the Miracle it self; it is likewise necessary to know their Opinions, that we may not confound the Things which really happen'd with the Things which were only imaginary, and but prophetic Revelations; for many Things in Scripture are related and believ'd as Things real, which were but Representations and meer Imaginations, as that God the first and highest of all Beings descended from Heaven, *Exod.* chap. 19. v. 18. *Deut.* chap. 5. v. 23. upon Mount *Sinai*, and that the Mountain smok'd because God came down upon it in the midst of Fire. We are likewise told of *Elijah's* going to Heaven in a fiery Chariot, with Horses of Fire; all which were but Representations suited to the Opinions of them who deliver'd to us those Things for Realities, when in truth they were but meer Representations. Whoever is but a little wiser than the Multitude, knows that God has neither Right Hand nor

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Left;

Left ; that he neither rests nor moves ; that he is comprehensively in no Place, but is infinite, and in Him are contained all Perfections. These Things, I say, are known to Men who judge of Things by the Perceptions of a pure Understanding, and not as their Fancy is affected by their outward Senses, as is usual with the Vulgar, who believe God to be Corporeal, and imagining he exercises Kingly Dominion, fancy his Throne to be in Heaven, above the Stars, at no great distance from the Earth ; to which and the like Opinions, many Cases in Scripture are accommodated, but yet ought not to be thought real by wise Men. To understand truly how Miracles happen'd, it concerns us to know the Phrases and Figures of the *Hebrew* Language ; for he that is not well acquainted with them, will take many Things in Scripture for Miracles, which were never thought so by the Pen-men of it ; so that he will not only be mistaken in the Things and Miracles that happen'd, but will likewise be ignorant what was the Meaning of those by whom the Scripture was originally written. For Example ; The Prophet *Zachary*, chap. 14. v. 7. speaking of a future War, says, *But it shall be one Day which shall be known to the Lord, nor Day nor Night : But it shall come*
to

to pass that at Evening-time it shall be light ; in which Words he seems to predict a great Miracle ; but they signify no more than that a doubtful Battle shou'd be fought, the Success of which shou'd be known only to God ; but towards the Evening the Jews shou'd be victorious. In the like Phrases and Expressions the Prophets were wont to foretel and write the Victories and Overthrows of the Nations. *Isaiah*, Chap. 13. v. 10. declares the Destruction of *Babylon* in these Words, *The Stars of Heaven, and the Constellations thereof shall not give their Light : The Sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the Moon shall not cause her Light to shine ;* which no Body believes did happen in the Destruction of that Empire ; nor that which the Prophet adds, v. 13. *Therefore will I shake the Heavens, and the Earth shall remove out of her Place :* In like manner, *Isaiah*, Chap. 48. v. 21. *They thirsted not when he led them through the Deserts : He caused the Waters to flow out of the Rock for them : He clave the Rock also, and the Waters gushed out ;* by which Words nothing more is meant, than that the Jews found Fountains in the Deserts, by which they quench'd their Thirst ; for no such Miracles happen'd, when by the Consent of *Cyrus* they return'd to *Jerusalem*. Many Ex-

pressions of like Nature occur in the Scripture, and are only Fashions of speaking among the *Jews*.

I need instance no more, but let it be observ'd, that the *Jews* made use of such Phrases, not only for Ornament to their Language, but also to express their Devotion ; and therefore attributed all Things to God ; so that the Scripture seems to relate nothing but Miracles, even when it speaks of Things meerly Natural. We are therefore to believe, that when the Scripture says, God harden'd the Heart of *Pharaoh*, nothing more was signify'd, than that *Pharaoh* was very obstinate and disobedient ; and when it is said, God open'd the Windows of Heaven, nothing more is to be understood, than that there fell abundance of Rain. Whoever then will consider, that many Things in Scripture are related very briefly, imperfectly, and without Circumstances, shall find nothing repugnant to Natural Reason ; but many Things which seem very obscure, may with a little Meditation be explain'd, and easily understood. I shall close this Head with some Proofs from fundamental Principles of Scripture : That the Course and Order of Nature in general, is constant and immutable. *Psalms* 148. v. 6. *He also established them for ever and ever : He hath made*

made a Decree that shall not pass : And Jeremiah, Chap. 31. v. 35, 36. Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the Sun for a Light by Day, and the Ordinances of the Moon and the Stars for a Light by Night, which divideth the Sea when the Waters thereof roar : If these Ordinances depart from me, saith the Lord, then the Seed of Israel shall cease also from being a Nation before me for ever. The Philosopher, in his Book of Ecclesiastes, Chap. 1. v. 10. saith, Is there any Thing whereof it may be said, see this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us ; vers. 11. he says, there is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come, with those that come after ; by which Words he means, that nothing happens which has not happen'd before, though it be forgotten. In the 3d Chap. v. 11. he says, Whatever God doth, it shall be for ever ; nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it : vers. 15. That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been ; which clearly declares, that Nature keeps a constant, fix'd and unchangeable Course : That God in all Ages known and unknown is still the same : That the Laws of Nature are so large and perfect, nothing can be added to, or taken from them : And, lastly, that there is nothing new in Miracles but what seems so to Man's ignorance ;
these

these Things are expressly declared in Scripture: But 'tis no where said, that any Thing happens in Nature either contrary to its Laws, or not proceeding from them: So that Miracles require Causes and Circumstances, and are not immediately wrought by I know not what kingly and absolute Empire, which the common People attribute to God, but by his Divine Power and Decree manifested in the Laws and Order of Nature. And that Miracles may be wrought by seducing Impostures, as appears, *Deut.* Chap. 13: and *Matthew*, Chap. 24. v. 24. from whence it manifestly follows, that Miracles were Things natural; and therefore (to use *Solomon's* Expression) are not to be thought new or contrary to Nature, but have as near an Alliance as possible to natural Things; which may be easily made out by the Rules drawn from Scripture. And notwithstanding we are taught these Things by Scripture, yet they are not deliver'd to us as Doctrines necessary to Salvation, but only that the Prophets receiv'd them as we do; and therefore 'tis left to every Man's Liberty to have such an Opinion of them as is most likely to incline him most religiously and heartily to serve God: And of this Mind was *Josephus*, for he concludes his Second Book of *Antiquities* with

with these Words: ' Neither ought any
 ' Man to be amazed at so wonderful a
 ' Relation, that thorough the Red Sea a
 ' Passage shou'd be found to save so many
 ' Persons in Time past, and they rude
 ' and unskilful, whether it was done by the
 ' Will of God or that it chanc'd of it self;
 ' since not along ago the Sea of *Pamphy-*
 ' *lia* was divided to give Way to *Alexan-*
 ' *der the Great* and his Soldiers, having no
 ' other Passage to the Invasion of the *Per-*
 ' *sians*; and this is acknowledg'd by all
 ' who have given any Account of his Ac-
 ' tions. And therefore concerning these
 Things every one may believe as they
 please.

Having shewn in what Sense the
 Scripture is to be taken in the Account it
 gives us of these Things, I shall now
 proceed to shew that the *Supreme Magi-*
strates are the *Supreme Heads, Judges and*
Interpreters of all Things both in Church
 and State; because there are those who
 will not allow Supreme Civil Magistrates
 to have any Power over Things *sacred*, or
 own them to be Judges or Interpreters of
 God's Laws; nay accuse and traduce them,
 and as *St. Ambrose* did the Emperor *Theo-*
dosius excommunicate them out of the
 Church. But it is plain these Men have a
 mind

mind to divide and share the Government, or get it wholly into their own Hands.

For *Religion* hath the Force of a Law *only* from *their* Decrees who have the supreme Power, and all external Religious Worship and outward Practice of Piety ought to be suited and accommodated to the Peace of the Common-wealth ; that is, so ordered and regulated as may make most for its Quiet, and consequently ought to be settled and determined by the supreme Power, to whose Judgment in all Causes, Sacred as well as Civil, we ought to submit. For since the Kingdom of God consists in the Exercise of Justice and Charity it follows; the Kingdom of God *is* where Justice and Charity have the Force of a Law or Precept.

Now I think there is little difference, whether God teaches us the Practice of Justice and Charity by natural Light or Revelation, or whether God command it ; for it matters not how it was revealed, so as it obtain the Force of a Law, and become in the highest Degree obligatory to Men. If then *Justice* and *Charity* cannot become a Law but by the Power of the supreme Magistrates, it will be easily granted (seeing supreme Power is always in the Hand [of the supreme Magistrates])
that

that Religion becomes a binding Law only by their Decrees, who have the Power of Government; and that God has no peculiar Kingdom over Men but by them who have the supreme Ruling Power. Now it is plain, that the outward Practice of Justice and Charity becomes an obligatory Law by the Command of the supreme governing Power. For in the State of Nature, *Reason* cannot pretend to any greater Power than natural Appetite may; and they who live according to the Laws and Dictates of Natural Appetite, have as much right to all Things within their Power, as they who live according to the Rules of *Reason*. So that we cannot conceive there can be in the State of Nature any Sin; nor can we think God to be a Judge punishing Sins, but all Things carry'd on in their Course according to the Laws of universal Nature. To use *Solomon's* own Words; *All Things come alike to all, there is one Event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked, to the Clean and to the Unclean*, no Place being left for Justice and Charity. But that the *Dictates* of Reason, that is, the Divine Law written in our Hearts, might obtain the Strength and Force of a Law, it was necessary that every Man should part from his natural Right, and transfer it either upon all, upon

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some, or upon one; and then we first came to know what was Justice and what Injustice, what Equity and what Iniquity. Justice therefore, and the Dictates of right Reason, with Love to our Neighbour, became a Precept and obligatory Law by the Power and Decrees of supreme Magistrates: And because the Kingdom of God consists in the Power that *Justice, Charity, and true Religion*, have over us, by becoming a Law to us; it follows, that God hath no peculiar Kingdom over Men, but by those who have the *Supreme Ruling Power*. Whether we consider Religion revealed to us by natural or propheticall Light, the Demonstration is universal, seeing Religion is the same, and equally revealed by God, which way soever it be supposed to come to our Knowledge: And therefore that Religion prophetically reveal'd might obtain the Force of a Law among the *Jews*, it was necessary every Man shou'd first part with his natural Right, and that all with one Consent shou'd resolve to obey and submit to all Things which should by God be prophetically revealed to them; just as People do in democratical Governments, where all with common Consent agree to live according to the Dictates of Reason. And tho' the *Jews* did transfer their Power upon God, yet they did it more in *Opinion* than

than *Reality*; for the supreme Power really and absolutely remained still in them, till they transferred it upon *Moses*, who was thenceforward an absolute King, and by *him* only God reigned over the *Jews*; their Church began with his Government, he taught the People Religion, settled their Terms of Worship, and chose their Priests; by which it is evident that the whole Exercise of Religion, and all the Service that concern'd it, depended only upon his Command, who had the Power of chusing the High Priest, or of consulting God without him, or of condemning the Prophets that prophesy'd in his Reign. But howsoever this Authority of the supreme Magistrate over all Things sacred as well as civil may extend, it is the Right of all Men in a free Common-wealth to have the Liberty both of Thinking and Speaking as they please. For since 'tis impossible that our Minds or Thoughts should be in the Power of another, because no Man can transfer or be compell'd to transfer his Natural Right of Reason, and judging of Things, upon any other Man, that Government must be *Tyrannical* that assumes an Authority over any one's *Mind* or *Way of Thinking*; and supreme Powers deprive their Subjects of their *just Right*, when they command them to *receive* or

reject according to their Prescriptions, whatever they declare to be true or false, and positively appoint what Opinions and Notions Men in their Devotions shall have of God; which is a thing wholly in a Man's own Power, and from which no Man, tho' he were willing, *can* part; for in spite of all that Art *can* do, Men will abound in their own Sense, and there will for ever be as many Diversities of Opinions as there are of Palates.

Nor tho' the supreme Powers have a right to all Things, and are believ'd to be Interpreters both of Law and Religion, cou'd they ever keep Men from judging according to their Reason and Capacity, nor from being this or that way affected: They may indeed esteem all Men Enemies who do not in all Things absolutely think as they do; but we do not here dispute of their Power, but of what is most convenient and profitable. It is true, supreme Powers may reign *Tyrannically*, and put Subjects to death for very slight Causes if they please; but this cannot be done with *Reason* or *Prudence*, because it will prove dangerous and destructive to the Government: And as every Man by the sovereign Right of Nature is absolute Master of his own *Thoughts*, and has Liberty of *judging* and *thinking* as he

he pleases, Supreme Powers in any Commonwealth can never hope for Success in prescribing to Men of different Opinions Limits and Rules for what they shall say; for it is natural to all Men (tho' ever so much Secrecy be requir'd) to declare to others their Thoughts; and therefore that Government is *Tyrannical* where such a Liberty is deny'd, and that moderate and well ordered where it is allow'd. For the *End* and *Purpose* of Government is *Liberty*, and consequently every one ought to Reason and Believe as he pleases. It is to be confess'd that there are some Inconveniences some time attending this Liberty: But what Wisdom and Prudence can prevent all Inconveniences? And he that by Laws thinks to do it, will sooner provoke than amend vicious Men. Inconveniences that cannot possibly be prevented or avoided, must be tolerated; we must bear them though they are hurtful to us. Of how many Mischiefs are Luxury, Drunkenness, Envy, and Avarice the Cause? Yet these are tolerated because it is not in the Power of Laws to restrain them. Certainly then *Liberty* of *Judgment* should be allow'd, which is truly a Virtue, and subject to no Inconveniences in a well constituted and limited Government. Besides, this *Liberty* is very necessary to the Advancement of Arts and Sciences, in which the greatest

est Proficiency is always made by those Men who have their Judgments free and unprejudiced ; and though the Meaner sort of People may be awed by the supreme Magistrate from speaking what they think, the Wise and Honest cannot be silent ; for our Nature is such that nothing gives us greater Concern than to see the Opinions we believe to be true, condemn'd, and our selves branded with Impiety for acting according to our Belief.

In all Laws against Opinions, the *vicious* are seldom concerned ; they are generally made to *provoke* the Good, and not to *restrain* the Bad, and cannot be defended without a great deal of Danger to the Government : They are also entirely useless, for Men can never obey Laws which condemn those Opinions they firmly believe to be true ; nay, the making of such Laws hath often caused great Division even in the Church, for the Clergy wou'd quickly leave their fierce and bitter *Conventions*, if they did not hope with the general Applause of the People to insult over their Adversaries, and get Preference, by procuring the Magistrate to favour, and the Laws to countenance their Opinions. Both Reason and daily Experience tell us, that Laws which command what every Man must believe, and forbid *speaking or writing* against *this or that* Opinion,

Opinion, are commonly instituted to gratify or give way to the Passions of those, who rather than endure a Confutation from ingenious Men, will with their stern and morose Authority turn the Peoples Zeal into Fury, and set them on upon whom they please. But would it not be much better to suppress the Anger and Rage of the Multitude, than to make Laws against Men who love *Virtue* and *Learning*? What can be more mischievous to a Commonwealth than to punish them, only because they are of *this* or *that* Opinion, and cannot dissemble it? They who *know* themselves to be *honest* never fear Punishment as the Wicked do, neither will they by *base* Submissions and Recantations endeavour to avoid it; they are neither troubl'd with Guilt or Repentance, but think it glorious to suffer in the Cause of *Liberty* and *Virtue*.

That *Faith* and *Honesty* therefore may be in greater Esteem than Dissimulation and Flattery, that supreme Magistrates may keep their Power undisturb'd by seditious Persons, *Liberty* of *Judgment* ought to be allow'd; and Men are so to be governed that though they are of different and contrary Opinions, they may live in Peace and Amity together, and in their Bargains and Covenants among themselves make it more necessary that they shou'd be

be honest and sincere in their Dealings than the strictest Observers of any Religious Worship. It is plain therefore that whoever endeavours in a free Government to take away the Liberty of Mens judging for themselves, (which ought not to be suppress'd) and under pretence of being God's Elect makes the Magistrate's Power subordinate to theirs, and not only undervalues but usurps his Authority, is a Disturber of the publick Peace, and destroys the very Being of all Commonwealths; and consequently it's necessary to place Religion and Piety in the Practice of Justice and Charity, and to make Things Sacred as much subject to supreme Powers as Things Civil, and to take Cognizance of nothing but Mens Actions, but indulge them all in the Liberty of Thinking and Speaking as they please.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAge 7. l. 27. for *Pjar* read *Fjar*. p. 32. l. 14. for *he so often heard*, r. *he had so often heard*. p. 22. l. 28. for *expres* r. *expreses*.